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G. BAILEY, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR; JOHN G. WHITTIER, CORRESPONDING EDITOR.

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THE NATIONAL ERA.

WASHINGTON, MAY 19, 1851.

For the National Era.

DORA'S CHILDREN.

A SEQUEL TO "THE DARKENED CASEMENT."

BY GRACE GREENWOOD.

FREDERIC PRESTON.

Those who have read "The Darkened Casement" will remember the dying mother's sketch of her son — in which she represented him as a noble, generous lad, but with the not often co-existing faults of a will too yielding, too great susceptibility to all outward influences, and an ambition for worldly distinction too restless and absorbing. To the strengthening of the manly will and the moral principles of his son, and to the chastening and directing of his ambition, Captain Preston, keeping ever in his constant heart the last injunctions of his wife, most conscientiously devoted himself. And great joy must it have been for him to mark, day by day, that fresh, young, plastic nature rounding into grace and beauty, and growing more strong and firm under his wise and gentle influence.

Captain Preston early resolved not to expose his son to the many temptations and dangerous associations of college life, but, being desirous that he should receive a complete classical and mathematical education, placed him under the tuition of a distant relative of his own—a retired clergyman, and one of the most eminent scholars in New England.

So, in a simple, little household, in a quiet inland village, Frederic Preston spent full four years, devoting himself faithfully to study, varied only by occasional visits to his native city, some thirty miles distant.

Captain Preston was often with his son, and when absent was in the habit of writing to him almost daily. It was his wish and advice that Frederic should strengthen his constitution, and confirm his fine health by vigorous exercises and all innocent, manly sports. He also counselled him not wholly to neglect social pleasures; but Frederic was too ambitious and too studious in his habits to have much taste for general society.

The family of Mr. Ellsworth, Frederic's tutor, consisted of himself, his wife, an exceedingly lovely woman, and their youngest daughter, Annie, a sweet girl of fifteen, when Frederic first came *to* her father's. Annie was one who was always spoken of by her friends as "a dear, good child;" she was not very beautiful, or brilliant, but she possessed a warm, unselfish, faithful heart, and an earnest, attentive, comprehensive mind. Like Frederic's mother, she had been from her early childhood passionately fond of reading and study; but, unlike Dora, she was blessed with great physical strength and firm health. She could pore over her books hour after hour, without banishing the bloom from her cheek or the light from her eye, and she would rise from the most intense abstraction of study, to join in the usual sports of happy girlhood, or to assist her mother in the cares and labors of the household. She became at once Frederic's companion in his studies, and was but a little way behind him in many, while she equalled him in some.

My reader will scarcely wonder, that as the months and years went by, the study which most deeply and pleasantly interested Frederic Preston was that of the rapidly unfoldng character of his fair young friend; for, in their close daily companionship, he came at last to know every trait, and power, and passion, and aspiration, almost as he knew those of his own nature. Often would the young student pause, lift his eyes from the book before him, and fix them on Annie's noble, kindling face, as she sat opposite to him, lost in her studies, and read in that sweet volume deeper love and more beautiful truth than geometrical problems contained, or Greek characters expressed. And it was strange, that however absorbed Annie might be by her lesson at such times, she failed not to feel a sudden, sweet disturbance troubling her stilled heart, and jostling her thought from the point where she had fixed it; and involuntarily, with an inquiring smile, she would lift her eyes to his. Glance would meet glance, then be quickly, though scarce consciously, withdrawn.

And thus it was that those two free, unwarped natures, drawn near in their actual lives, and yet nearer by the kindred of the spirit, like two fair young trees, growing up together, gradually and almost imperceptibly leaned towards one another, and their thoughts and aspirations mingled, like intertwining branches.

Slowly and unconsciously ascended each heart into the upper realm, the divine relations of a great and holy affection. So innocent, so tender and childlike was their love, even in the fulness of its beauty and power—so lightly and quietly lay upon each spirit those bonds formed link by link, by congenial pursuits, pleasant daily associations, and gentle nightly dreams, that both were unknowing of the depth and intensity of that love, of the strength and endurance of those bonds.

At last Frederic became aware that he could never shut Annie out of his visions of the future—were they proud or sorrowful, of success or defeat, of poverty or splendor, she was ever at his side, a cheering, guiding, or consoling presence. And ever when his heart burned most for fame, and he listened most eagerly to the voice of a selfish, unworthy ambition, he would feel the soft rebuke of her mild eyes, and blush, though none were near.

When Frederic Preston left the village of W———, to pursue the study of the law in his native city, he was not formally plighted to Annie—he had not even given full expression by spoken or written words to the affections which lay upon his heart with the weight of an inestimable treasure. But what need was there of words, when every look towards her was a protestation—every tone a fervent prayer for love? All this she understood, and rested with perfect faith and a measureless content in the assurance thus given her—the eloquent, though unspoken avowal of a love which she returned with all the strength and pure devotion of her nature.

Frederic Preston pursued his legal studies with an eminent lawyer, who became to him a friend as well as a preceptor. Mr. Abbott soon perceived the fine ability, read aright the amiable and manly character of his young student, and bent himself to advance his interests. In the family circle of the Abbotts there was much of true refinement, and here Frederic saw fashionable society in its most attractive form, and very soon felt himself entirely at home. He was, as we know, well read—he possessed much native elegance and rare conversational talent, nor was he wanting in those lighter accomplishments which most grace a gentleman.

At the urgent request of Mr. Abbott and his family, Frederic accompanied them to their pleasant summer residence, on the sea-side, some five miles from the city, where he continued to spend his office hours.

Many were the visitors at that hospitable mansion, and endless the plans of pleasure—it was a season of rare enjoyment to Frederic, and for several weeks his letters to Annie, which were long, frequent, and most confiding in their tone, were filled with lively descriptions of novel and pleasant scenes, and graphic sketches of character—but, finally, those letters came less often, and grew strangely formal and constrained, or seemed careless and hurried.

During the first week of his stay at the seashore, he heard much of the expected arrival of a sister of his preceptor, Mrs. Ashton, who was about returning from Europe, whither she had, a year or two previous, accompanied an invalid husband, whom she had buried in Italy. She came at last, and Frederic, who had looked for a pale, thin, sorrowful, middle-aged matron, was agreeably surprised to meet a young and beautiful woman—brilliant and conversable in spite of her weeds. Mrs. Ashton was in truth a most superb and fascinating creature. She had all the graces and enchantments which rare beauty, fair talent, many accomplishments, a thorough knowledge of the world, and a most artistic and refined coquetry, could give her. In her marriage there had been scarce the pretence of love on either side. Her husband, an eminent politician and diplomatist, had outlived the season of impassioned feeling when he met her, and honored her with his distinguished alliance. Though absorbed in his narrow pursuits, drowned in politics, he was proud of his wife, cared for her happiness while he lived, and left her an immense fortune at his death. On her part, the wife had been outwardly faithful and duteous—had nursed him patiently through his long illness—shed some tears, and planted a rose-tree on his grave. There had been given no tender child-love to draw nearer those two hearts which had throbbed side by side for years, but between which there was in truth a cold and weary distance.

Mrs. Ashton had consoled herself for the dead life of a loveless and childless marriage, with a leadership in society, by wielding a powerful though secret influence in the political world, and by her enthusiasm for music. She was an artistic singer, and played upon the harp and piano very finely, though with more brilliancy than feeling.

In short, Caroline Ashton had given to the world her life, her very soul, and the world had rewarded her by making her a large sharer in the most refined of its intellectual and sensual pleasures, and by the bestowal of its most intoxicating homage. She was in full possession of her rare gifts and acquirements—rich, free, and twenty-five—when she cast her beautiful eyes upon Frederic Preston.

He was then little more than twenty-one, but looked some years older, as his figure was tall, firmly built, and fully developed, while his countenance wore a remarkable natural expression. He was handsome, even beautiful, his face being one that failed not to attract admiring attention everywhere. With Mrs. Ashton's artistic tastes, it was little wonder that our friend found peculiar favor in her eyes from the first. So much was her fancy captivated, through her sense of beauty, and the little romance that yet lingered in her coldly brilliant character, like the few, small, Alpine flowers that grow among the glaciers—so quick was her recognition of his fine talent and of the wild ambition, so kindred to her own, which sometimes blazed in his eye and broke from his lips in impatient, almost reckless, expression—that her new and pleasant impressions and vague speculations at last formed themselves into a strange, but well-defined plan. She would bestow her hand and her great fortune upon Frederic Preston—would mould his yet plastic character, develop his genius, concentrate his enthusiasm, aid him by her knowledge of the world, and urge him on to success and fame by the tireless force of her own passionate will. She could not be ashamed of him as he was—she would be unspeakably proud of him when she had made him all she desired.

And Frederic—how stood he affected towards her? For a while he was reserved in his intercourse with her—in truth, was somewhat jealous of a woman who, with all her tact, could not at all times conceal a certain consciousness of superiority. But soon this failed to pique his pride, and he listened to her soft, even-toned voice, till it became indeed "the voice of the charmer."

Mrs. Ashton ever spoke with careless indifference, in a tone of superior wisdom, half pitying, half contemptuous, of a simple life of the affections—but dwelt with kindling enthusiasm on a life of intellectual power, and refined sensual pleasures, as one worthy of the gods.

She spoke of love, as life's morning dream, exceeding sweet and beautiful, yet which must pass away, like the early mist; but of the pursuit of fame and power, as the earnest, worthy, glorious business of the day. She believed in *passion*—she had herself called forth too often that lava-tide of the heart, to doubt its existence—but of a pure, exalting, unselfish, unworldly affection—that deep, mysterious sympathy of the spirit, that close, indissoluble union of life with life, that perfect blending of two natures, one for evermore, she had no real belief or conception.

And Frederic listened to those deadly sophistries which came sliding softly through the most perfect lips in the world—listened and received them into his warm, impressible heart, which seemed to harden about them, and hold them, as a rock holds crystals. And gradually, the little fairy isle of love, and hope, and happiness, once so green and bright in the sea of his future, sunk down and disappeared, and the chill waters of a worldly and selfish philosophy passed over it.

Yet it need hardly be said that Frederic Preston did not love Mrs. Ashton. We know that he *loved* Annie Ellsworth He gave to his new mistress a half intellectual, half passionate worship; there was no close confidences, no careless familiarity, no companionship, no sweet sense of nearness, between the two. Frederic felt Mrs. Ashton's presence in the quickened action of his heart—she always roused, but never soothed him. The casual touch of her hand sent shocks through all his frame—he first sought, then shrank from the gaze of her eyes, with he knew not what of apprehension and dismay. Ah, there was strange power in those eyes—power even in the slow fall and upward sweep of the long, dark lashes.

Yet though Frederic Preston did not love Mrs. Ashton, he sometimes imagined that he did; nor could he be blind to her partiality for himself—and well he saw, with his sharpened vision, that with the wealth and influence of such a wife, the realization of the wildest dreams of his ambition was possible. Finally—the truth must be told—he began to congratulate himself on the fact that there existed no positive, formal engagement between himself and Annie, and strove to shut out from his heart the now sad conviction that the poor girl's very life was bound up in his.

It was a sultry night, in the last of August. The air was of that peculiar heaviness which forebodes a violent thunder-storm, and the Abbotts were seated on the vine-shaded piazza, looking at the masses of black clouds which lowered over the ocean, and watching the lightnings which played incessantly along the horizon now, and dropping down and quenching themselves in the sea.

Mrs. Ashton and Frederic Preston were alone in the drawing-room. Mrs. Ashton sat at the piano, now running her fair hands over the keys, in a wild, fitful manner, and singing snatches of songs—now conversing with her companion in tones more than usually low and silvery. The two had been riding in the woods along the seashore that afternoon, and a graceful wild vine, which Frederic had gathered, now rested on the classic brow of the dark-eyed widow. Never, in all the time he had known her, had she seemed so perilously beautiful to Frederic. There was a soft, dreamy, half-sad expression in her face, which he had never before remarked—a tender languor a thousand times more irresistible than her usual queenly air and triumphant smile. Alas, at that moment, how utterly forgotten was the simple village maiden, his boyhood's love—how utterly blotted from his heaven seemed that fair star, so late his guiding light! Annie's last letter, breathing in every line a generous trust, untroubled by coldness or neglect, he had left for weeks unanswered. It came to him just as he was about setting forth for a ride with Mrs. Ashton, and he flung it into his desk, where it actually remained for a day or two unread—quite forgotten. Yet there was a time when he eagerly welcomed a letter in that familiar hand, and read it with kindling eyes, pausing only to press it to his lips, ere he broke the seal. Now, as he looked on that spendid woman at his side, with the proud conviction that she might be his, a passionate impulse prompted him to make that avowal which had again and again trembled on his lips, but which had ever been repressed by a strange, unknown power. He bowed over her, sought her eyes, and would have spoken, but that at the moment she began singing a verse of "the Vesper Hymn to the Virgin." It was the last hymn which he remembered to have heard his mother sing, and now it struck back the mad words of a false love from his lips, and left him silent, from the sense of an angelic rebuke. But presently it seemed that the dead mother's hand was withdrawn from his lips, that her warning presence passed from his side—for, as Mrs. Ashton ceased warbling one of Moore's delicious love-songs, Frederic knelt at her side grasped her hand, and looking into her eyes, murmured—"Caroline!" but not a word more could he utter. This was the first time he had ever presumed to call her by her Christian name. Yet, leaving her hand in his, she smiled graciously, saying, "Well, *Frederic!*"

And he was lost! No, no—salvation came in the form of James, the Irish servant, who entered, saying: "I beg your pardon, sir, but here is a *letter* just brought by the post, marked '*Deliver immediately*,' and I thought maybe you'd like to read it at once."

Frederic, struck by a strange dread, caught the letter, tore it open on the spot, and read these hurried lines:

"DEAR FREDERIC: My daughter's life is despaired of. She is very low with the typhus fever. If you would see her alive, come to us at once. "CHARLES ELLSWORTH."

Oh, human heart! thou fathomless mystery! thou inexplicable contradiction! In one brief moment, from the lowest deeps of Frederic's nature welled up the old love, in a swift, resistless tide of anguish, remorse, and irrepressible tenderness, uprooting and sweeping away the new love, as it were a slight flower—dashing in pieces its proud dreams, as the rising waves scatter in fragments frail structures built by children for pastime on the shore, when the tide is low.

With a hurried adieu, and a partial explanation to his friends, Frederic sprang on to his horse, and set out for W—— at full speed. He had not ridden far before the storm which had been so long lowering in the east came down with great fury. The night was utterly dark, and the half-distracted rider could only see his way by flashes of lightning. His horse was a fine one, and for full twenty miles bore up bravely; but finally, on crossing a little bridge, from which the swollen stream had carried away a plank, he fell through, and so injured one shoulder that his master saw at once that he could proceed no farther. So, hastily fastening the faithful creature by the road side, there being no house or barn near, Frederic resolutely pursued his way on foot. A superhuman strength seemed given him; he scarcely felt fatigue or heeded the tempest, as for five long miles he toiled up and dashed down the hills, bespattered with mud, drenched with the rain, and half blinded by the lightning! There was a fear at his heart colder than the chill of the rain, and more dismaying than the lightning. Yet he struggled on, hoping only to reach Annie's death-bed, to weep out his sorrow and repentance at her feet, to receive one word, one look of forgiveness, ere she died. And how the past came back! the dear, lost season of innocent joys, simple desires, andpurest love. He remembered how, only a year ago, Annie had patiently and tenderly nursed him through a fever like the one which had now prostrated her. Thus, torn with fear and self-reproach, he at last drew near the pleasant familiar house of the Ellsworths. He crossed the lawn, he staggered against the door, and, after a brief struggle for calmness, knocked. The housekeeper, whom he well knew, opened to him. He entered, but for his soul he could not utter a word.

"She is living, sir," said the woman, who understood his silence; "but she has been quite unconscious for several hours, and we have no more any hope that she will long continue with us."

"For God's sake lead me to her!" cried Frederic, and in a moment more he stood in Annie's room—that room once so light and cheerful, but now the shadowed and silent chamber of the dying. All her dearest friends were there—father, mother, sister and brother, weeping and waiting for the coming of the dread angel; but Frederic saw only that one beloved, lying pale and insensible—her blue eyes closed, her brown hair floating over the pillow, her faded lips apart, and the breath struggling up from her breast faintly, and yet more faintly. One white hand lay across her bosom, and Frederic, kneeling at her bedside, bowed his face upon this, and covered it with his tears and his kisses. None sought to reprove or check the outburst of his grief, as he cried—

"Oh, Annie! do not leave me! It is I—Frederic. Look on me once more, my love, once more!"

And she did look on him! He felt that white hand tremble against his lips—then those blue eyes slowly unclosed, and fixed upon his upturned face a glance of recognition, of joy, of love. She spoke not, but slowly lifted her hand and laid it among the damp curls of his hair, tenderly smoothing them back from his forehead. Then Frederic laid his head down by hers, kissed her cheek, and wept convulsively. Mr. Ellsworth would have removed him, but Annie whispered—

"Let him lie here, father! I shall receive life again from his lips—do not take him away, for he has saved me!"

And he had saved her! From that hour the fever was broken, the disease departed, and dear Annie recovered. Yet for many days her spirit seemed to stand trembling on the confines of the vale of shadows, ere even that mightiest love could draw her back into the light and warmth of life. It was only by filling her heart with the tones of the best beloved voice, that she could be made to forget the celestial music which floated to her ear, when so long she lay deaf to all sounds of earth—and only the mute entreaty of those sorrowful eyes could make her unheedful of fair angel forms still beckoning to her across the river of death.

After a month of the most careful and tender nursing, Annie was able to leave her room, supported by Frederic—almost borne in his arms. He wheeled her arm chair toward the fire, arranged the pillows about her, and lifting her little feet, placed them on a soft cushion. He read to her in a low voice, from her favorite books, talked to her in a yet lower voice, sweeter things than *she* had ever found in books. He brought her the brightest flowers and the greenest mosses from the autumn woods; and when, one mild day, early in November, she was able to take a little stroll with him through the village, leaning fondly and dependingly on his arm, as his own betrothed wife, he was more happy, and proud, and grateful to God, than he had language to express.

Frederic had faithfully confided to Annie the story of his passion, or rather infatuation, for Caroline Ashton; and she, in the wisdom of her own generous nature, regarded it as but a brief usurpation, by the intellect and the senses, of the rightful rule of the heart—a heart which, though for a time a sad truant, weak and erring, had never utterly forsaken its love and her.

On Christmas Eve there was a simple, quiet wedding party assembled in Mr. Ellsworth's pleasant parlor. First, of course, were the bride and bridegroom, Annie and Frederic, looking as nobody had ever seen them look before—handsomer, happier, and more interesting every way. The bridesmaids were Pauline Preston, grown a tall and elegant girl, and "little Louise," now no longer "pale-faced" and plain. The groomsmen were, Mr. Ernest St. John, a young gentleman who looked as poetical as his name would lead one to hope—being a slight, delicate person, with a fair Greek face, expressive, if not of genius, of a noble spirituality far more rare and beautiful—and Mr. Walter Edwards, of New York, a distant relative of the Prestons—a remarkably grave-looking but handsome young man of nineteen, who was just about sailing for Germany, where he was to complete his education.

Mr. Ellsworth was the officiating clergyman, but Captain Preston had the first kiss of the bride, and all were merry and sad at once. There was no woman's smile, at least, that shone not through tears.

One year from that night, there was a grand wedding at the Abbotts', when Mrs. Ashton became again the proud wife of a distinguished statesman. The happy pair set out at once for Washington; but the splendor of that wedding did not soon pass from the memory of some of the guests. Such high-bred elegance was there in the air of the bridegroom, despite his years and portly figure! and such diamonds as the bride wore!

Somewhat more than eight years had passed. Frederic Preston, who from the time of his marriage had been established in his native town, living with his father and sisters, in Dora's own dear cottage-home, had met with fair success in his profession, had been happy, most happy, in his marriage, and was the proud father of three lovely children. He was not yet, however, in any position of power and honor in the State—not from the want of political abilities and predilections, but because he had chosen to stand forth rather prominently for certain principles more honorable to him than popular with the multitude. Frederic possessed genuine eloquence, conciliating manners, and a noble character; all of which gave him great influence over the minds of the people, speaking ever, though he most frequently was, *against* the tide of popular prejudice. So general was the appreciation of the force of Mr. Preston's character, and of his peculiar intellectual power, that many were the temptations which came to him in the shape of secret overtures from parties and political leaders, of place and preferment, if he would abandon his present "lofty, but impracticable purposes," and sacrifice his favorite "abstractions." To all such propositions Frederic had returned but one reply—an unqualified and indignant rejection. But it happened, at length, there arose an unfortunate difference between himself and some of his associates in the cause to which he had devoted all his energies and sacrificed so many worldly interests; he felt himself wronged, distrusted, and ungratefully forsaken, by those to whom he had long been bound by the close fellowship of a holy, common cause, the brotherhood of a great truth; and, wounded and embittered, he withdrew himself from them for a time. That misunderstanding had seemed but a slight thing in the beginning; but the breach had been widened by thoughtless or designing persons, till it seemed almost impassable. It was then, when so peculiarly open to temptation, that Frederic received a confidential letter, which might have staggered him in his best hours. This was from Mr. Abbott, his former preceptor in the law, now an eminent political leader, high in office. It was written in a kind, a genuinely friendly tone; it was a flattering tribute to Frederic's talent, and an earnest remonstrance against the use to which he was putting it—an appeal, almost an entreaty, to turn, while it was yet time, from the course which he was pursuing with more generosity than wisdom, and for the sake of his family and friends to enter upon the enviable career so plainly open before him, and to seize the good fortune which awaited him. It contained most ingenious arguments, to prove that he could even ultimately advance those very truths now so dear to him, by a temporary abandonment of their advocacy. In conclusion, the writer earnestly, though delicately, pressed upon his young friend the acceptance of an honorable and lucrative appointment, and prophecied for him much success and fame, *if only he would be faithful to the principles and interests of his new party.*

More than once Frederic Preston's face flushed as he read this letter. Was it the blush of honest shame, or the rekindling of the old baleful fire? Ah! he hardly knew himself which it bespoke.

At length he sprang to his feet, and strode rapidly up and down his room, the quivering of his lip and the swelling of the veins in his forehead revealing the struggle which was passing in his breast.

He next resolved to seek Annie, though he felt that he should scarce dare to let her see how sorely he was tempted. He found his wife in the room which had once been his mother's—that "pleasant chamber which looked out upon the sea." She was sitting with her baby asleep upon her lap, and was busy in reading a manuscript which looked somewhat worn and yellow; and as Frederic drew near, he saw that she was weeping. But, dashing away her tears, and smiling on her husband, she said—

"I have been reading this last letter of your mother to your father. He has let me take it again. I cannot read it too often. Do you know, dearest, that I think what relates to you the truest and most beautiful of all?"

"Read it to me, love," said Frederic, striving to banish the half-sad, half-morose look he had worn of late—seating himself beside his wife, and winding his arm about her waist. And Annie read, in a soft, reverential voice, those touching injunctions of the dying mother contained in Dora's simple story. As she had been moved by one of Love's own divine intuitions, she read with peculiar impressiveness such passages as these:

"Oh! teach him what I have ever earnestly sought to inspire—a hearty devotion to the right—a fervent love of liberty—a humble reverence for humanity. Teach him to yield his ready worship to God's truth, wherever he may meet it—followed by the multitude strewing palm-branches, or forsaken, denied, and crucified. Teach him to honor his own nature by a brave and upright life, and to stand for justice and freedom against the world."

"Teach him to be watchful of his independence, to guard jealously his manliness. I know that I need not charge you to infuse into his mind a true patriotic spirit, free from cant and bravado—to counsel him against poor party feuds and narrow political prejudices. God grant that you may live to see our son, if not one of the world's great men, one whose pure life shall radiate good and happiness—whose strong and symmetrical character shall be a lesson of moral greatness, a type of true manhood."

As Annie read, she felt Frederic's head sinking on to her shoulder; and when she finished, his fast tears were stealing down her neck. Flinging aside the manuscript, she folded her arms about him, and wept with him, but said no word. Soon Frederic rose up with a clear smile, kissed the tears from Annie's beautiful eyes, and returned to his library, where he penned a brief letter to his friend, thanking him for his kindness, but decidedly, though mildly, declining the flattering offer which he had made.

That night Frederic Preston made one of a small assembly, where a few brave, true hearts were gathered together in the cause of justice and freedom. There he struck hands again with those from whom he had been for a little time estranged—frankly told them wherein they had wronged him, and as frankly confessed his own error in yielding to a proud and hasty resentment—pledged his faith once more to the Right, and renewed his early consecration to Freedom.

Frederic Preston may never be rich, or great, as the world counts riches and recognises greatness; but priceless treasures of affection are his, with the reverence of true and honorable natures, and the poor and oppressed "shall rise up and call him blessed."

For the National Era.

THE SINLESS.

BY MISS PHŒBE CAREY.

Walking with a cheerful spirit
Where her daily duties led,
"Father, keep me from temptation,"
This was all the prayer she said.

Often made she earnest pleading,
As she went from us apart,
To be saved through all her lifetime
From the weakness of her heart.

And she prayed that she might never,
Never in her trials below,
Bring her soul before the altar,
Wailing in unchastened woe.

So her hands of faith were strengthened,
And when clouds about her lay,
From her bosom, all the darkness,
She could softly put away.

Smilingly she went unaided,
When we would have led her on,
Saying always to our pleading,
Better that I go alone.

Turned she from the faces dearest
When her feet more feebly trod,
That she might not then be tempted
By a mortal love from God.

So the Father, for her pleading,
Kept her safe through all life's hours,
And her path went brightly upward
To eternity through flowers.

For the National Era.

LIFE ON PRAIRIE DE LA FLEUR.—No. 12.

BY MARY IRVING.

A "FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION."

[CONCLUDED.]

The much-expected sun did not rise the next morning—probably out of disgust at the cloud of smoke which Earth's western hemisphere stood ready to breathe into his face! At least we had no ocular demonstration of his rising; for the children, who peeped out betimes toward the east, came in with lengthened faces and sad forebodings.

"It's all clouded up!" complained one. "I think it mightn't rain to-day, of all days in the year!"

"My dear! is that just *right?*"

"Well, what will we do to get to Pin-nic Grove, and what will we do when we *do* get there, with the rain-drops leaking through the leaves, and soaking us and all 'the goodies?'"

"'Tis 'many a cloudy morning that makes a bright day'—wait and be patient!"

The hour of ten approached, and the sun had not yet came out to be our grand usher; but nobody thought of waiting for him, as it did not actually rain. Such a motley group of glad children in their holyday dresses of all fashions—some with blue shoes, some with black, and some without any shoes at all, bonneted and capped in all conceivable styles, you can rarely look upon. All were standing, with their teachers and the privileged dignitaries of the prairie, at a place previously agreed upon, to await the arrival of their grand carriages.

A cloud of dust in the distance at once heralded and concealed the coming vehicles; but as it cleared away, we beheld two four-horse wagons rumbling triumphantly along, with several less pretending followers in the rear. One was so garnished with sprigs and boughs of cedar that it looked like a bower of evergreen; its horses were trimmed to match. The other, which was the most roomy of the two, had planted waving banners behind the ear of each proud horse; and bore above all, fluttering from a strong staff, *our flag!* It *only* fluttered its huge wing; it did not expand to the morning air as we had hoped, but we trusted yet to the stimulus of the prairie breeze, when we should be fairly out of shelter of the Lake grove.

The wagons halted by the waiting throng; and such as were considered worthy of so high an honor were promoted to the first seats, under the shadowing of the flag-staff; then the remaining space was filled up by classes of the lesser boys and girls indiscriminately. The "flag-wagon," being furnished with four springless seats running lengthwise, accommodated just forty save one, of whom a number were adults; the others, fewer in proportion.

Now for the open prairie! We were not disappointed—the wind *did* rise, and our flag *did* unfurl magnificently in its grasp, as we bore towards Pin-nic Grove. The first mate of our unwieldy craft—or rather standard-bearer of our motley regiment—(for he held both offices, being none other than the "school-master" of the previous evening council) often arose to cast an anxious glance towards various points of the compass.

At length he spoke, "They're coming—the L. school! they'll not beat us at least!"

Soon, taking another observation, he exclaimed, more earnestly—

"There it is at last—the Quabasha flag-wagon! Do you see how it bends into a curve, like a boat's keel? It is terribly loaded down, that!"

Indeed it was crowded almost to overflowing.

"But their *banner* is not—no"—he cast up again a measuring glance at our own; "no—I am safe in reckoning it lacks three-quarters of a yard of equalling ours!"

Oh, the rivalry of poor human nature! how it will ooze into every human transaction since the days of Cain and Abel! And yet it is the strongest stimulus to the improvements of civilization.

We struck up a cheerful song as we entered the confines of Pic-nic Grove, about half a mile from the place of grand rendezvous. The other wagons caught up the strain, and we went on as merrily as a flock of swans, until, peeping through the tree-trunks, we could see afar off the hindmost of the benches which had been left for our use by a recent camp-meeting. The road was quite narrow here, and still soakingly wet—having been entirely shielded from the sunshine.

Our Quabasha neighbor piloted us along successfully, until suddenly—

"Hurrah there! Gee up! Whoa!" and a succession of female screams burst forth, followed by the floundering of horses, the crashing down of seats, and then the four spirited steeds at once broke their allegiance to the wagon, and rushed headlong among the trees, leaving the vehicle and its precious contents in the midst of "the grand mire!" Logs were speedily rolled to its side, and an unaccountable number of women and children lifted out, unhurt, but sadly frightened. The empty wagon was drawn aside as soon as practicable, and the road left free to us.

"*Do* let us get out!" implored the elder portion of the feminines among us, looking up in piteous entreaty to the driver.

"You can't walk through the mud, 'yur! Sit still; I reckon we'll push through—the slue an't powerful bad this season, and we an't loaded down like that craft yonder."

So in we went, with forebodings that were too surely realized. The same whip-cracking and shouting, the same struggling, and swaying, and screaming, and wagon number second stood brought up in the "slue," *minus* its two "leaders!" Our noble horses had struggled well, but they had snapped their traces, and with them the thread of our glorying!

Glad to find ourselves fairly upon our feet on *terra firma*, instead of being thrown into the heterogeneous heap we had feared to form a moment before, we cheerfully marshalled our *infantry* for a foot-march. But scarcely had we reached the limits of the semi-clearing where our journey was to end, when a few saucy, straggling rain-drops came pattering down upon our faces. A thousand anxious eyes looked upwards, but the glum skies deigned to give no token of favorable intentions, for a time. So, sheltering ourselves under umbrellas and parasols, as well as we could, we sat down to make the best of our condition.

The shower proved quite a damper to the orations of the day, but not to the singing, which resounded sweetly through the wood, swelling from hundreds of young voices, till even the birds under the boughs shook the rain-drops from their wings, and chirped in unison with us. One speaker after another mounted the high platform, sheltered by a splendid oak, and spoke a few words of counsel or of cheer to the listening thousands. All displayed a sense of the fitness of things, which would not be out of place in some of their Eastern brethren, to wit, the fitness of *short* speeches to hungry children.

The last who arose was an Englishman—a merry-hearted vassal of Victoria—and he aroused the echoes of laughter, out-ringing the echoes of song. Perhaps his good-natured oratory had some influence in clearing up the perturbed face of the sky; for, all at once, the sun-beams sparkled in upon us, and lit up every drop on leaf and spray into a glittering diamond. The speaker waved his hand in welcome to the gladdening light, then bowed his farewell to us—

"I will not keep you any longer, children. I know you are quite impatient for another kind of entertainment! The sunshine is smiling upon you—a happy omen! and an Englishman's good wishes will not spoil your Independence Day!"

A cheering shout went up to the brightening sky; and we were then marshalled in procession. Each class was preceded by its teacher and small banner, each school by its superintendent and flag. Thus arranged, by two and two, with the "lesser lambs" in front, we proceeded to the tables.

These had been, during the morning, under the supervision of a careful and bountiful committee—a tasteful one, moreover, as the first glimpse at them assured us. The rough boards that supported them were hidden by long, snowy cloths, and garlands of wild flowers, bouquets of roses and lilies, lay scattered in charming profusion among the innumerable dainties and delicacies that had been showered down from a thousand boxes and baskets. It was a feast for the eye, indeed—almost too beautiful for appetite to mar, thought we, as we made in procession the circuit of the long tables, and watched the myrtle and rose-wreaths blooming against the drifted icing of the huge plum-cakes. No such scruples of taste, or against taste, had the children, to be sure! We were arranged in a double or treble oval around the board, to act upon the rules previously recited, namely: That each teacher should officiate as agent for the appetites of his or her class, that all things might be done in proper order. This was a very necessary precaution, for the wants of the untutored little gentlemen and ladies were often found to be quite capacious or insatiable. One little epicure, indeed, with both hands and pockets filled to overflowing, insisted upon having a jumble to hold between his teeth! But he was a *rara avis*, of the vulture species, perhaps!

The tables were despoiled of their richness and beauty. A few words were spoken by one of the clergyment, the gratified children sang another glad hymn, and, with a buzz of thankfulness, all turned their faces homeward.

Our broken wagons, meanwhile, had been in surgical hands, and were "splintered up" for our reception, on the farther shore of the slue, fortunately over which a temporary bridge of logs had been cast.

Oh, how brilliantly beautiful was our flower prairie, in the glory of setting day, as we emerged upon it from Pic-nic Grove! Every leaf and blade seemed quivering its voiceless vesper-hymn of thankfulness to its Maker!

We drove toward home more silently, but not less happily, than we had journeyed from it. All the rivalry of the ambitious was hushed in satisfaction. Our flag had floated in triumphant size and show, as the tired arm of the standard-bearer could well testify. He, meanwhile, forgetful of his former dignity and anxiety, looked less upon his banner, less upon the fair face of nature before him, than into the laughing eyes of a rosy-cheeked damsel whom he had contrived to wile to a seat next his post of honor, and who, being no other than the queen pro tem. of the "Brick School House," could with propriety sport a little superiority over the less elevated prairie lassies. Forgetful of any *third* pair of prying optics, these two were acting a little innocent practical illustration of the axiom, "Young hearts will nestle with young hearts, young eyes will meet young eyes!"

Peace rest upon that little company, wherever the sun looks on them now! It left them on that eve, safely ensconced under their respective roofs. No matter whether those roofs bent over logs, bricks, or hewn timber, "'tis *the heart* makes the home," and all young hearts were happy there, though no crackling cannon had thundered their enthusiasm to the heavens, and no fire-rockets had whizzed it into the pure face of the stars!

Heaven guard the Sabbath schools of our prairie-land, and all that can prosper them! They are the strongest links in the chain that is to bind the next generation of the "mighty West" to the home of the Pilgrim Fathers, the green waves of the prairie to the mountain surges of New England.

For the National Era.

THE CHICAGO CONVENTION.

This is to be a *Christian Anti-Slavery Convention*, to be composed indiscriminately of those who worship Christ, and, in their respective churches, celebrate his death. The object of the Convention, like that of its predecessor in Cincinnati, is to take into consideration the whole subject of the relations of American Christianity to American Slavery, and to ascertain and declare the responsibilities and duties of Christians concerning it. Mission boards, ecclesiastical organizations—whatever connects anti-slaveholding with slaveholding Christians—will be prayerfully, and we trust candidly, considered and discussed. The prayers of all God's people are respectfully and earnestly solicited, and the attendance of such as can consistently come.

ONE OF THE COMMITTEE.

Knox College, Ill., April 28, 1851.

For the National Era.

MR. DAVID CRISTY AND WEST INDIA EMANCIPATION.

Mr. David Cristy, agent in Ohio for the Colonization Society, is out in a pamphlet, (addressed to the Constitutional Convention of Ohio, now in session,) one object of which pamphlet is, to "present an outline of the commercial failure of West India emancipation"—"the failure of FREE LABOR *tropical* cultivation." This he attempts, by showing that the amount of sugar, rum, and coffee, exported from these islands, is not now so great as in the days of slavery. If his argument proves anything, it proves, so far as commercial interests are concerned, that the proprietors of these islands should got back and adopt not only the slave system again, but also reënact the piratical slave trade in Africa; for, by his own showing, the exports of those islands during the slave-trade were greater than after it was abolished. Unfortunately for Mr. Cristy's position, his positions prove too much; for the world now knows, that neither slavery nor the slave trade are essential to commercial interests; and that if freedom on the soil does not, even commercially, work better than slavery, it is because of oppressive government, providential disasters, or some such incidental causes, and not freedom to man. Freedom is nature's order, and will work well.

Again: Mr. Cristy attempts to prove the failure of free labor tropical cultivation, "the commercial failure of British West India emancipation," by showing that the slaveholders of Cuba can produce sugar a little cheaper than the free laborers of British West Indies. Well, let us look at this a little more closely, and see if it proves general commercial prosperity.

The conductor of the State prison, or penitentiary, feeding the convicts with the cheapest food, and receiving their labor without compensation, can afford to sell the articles made for less than those who conduct free labor establishments, pay their operatives a full equivalent for their labor, and exact no more than the health, comfort, and well-being of their laborers allow. But does this prove that the latter—the free-labor system—is a commercial failure, the interests of all being promoted? If this be so, and commercial interests are the *great* thing to be looked at, and addressed as the paramount consideration to constitutional conventions, then the majority should go into penitentiaries, that the free may sell to traders at a lower price, and become rich upon unrequited labor. When Christians thus reason, we may say, in the language of Revelation, "Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off."

The Cuban slaveholder, by driving his slaves eighteen hours out of twenty-four, (what mental and physical suffering) and then robbing them of the proceeds of their labor, is able to sell some cheaper than the free laborers of the West Indies. But that is no evidence of the *general* prosperity of the inhabitants of Cuba. The whole affair reminds us of an anecdote of two dealers in brooms. One said to the other, "I do not know how you can afford to sell your brooms cheaper than I do, for I steal the material to make mine out of." "O!" said the other, "*I steal mine already made!*" If, then, a man should set up a broom-factory, raise his own broom-corn, and with his own hands make his own brooms, and then could not afford to sell quite as cheap as he who "stole his already made," Mr. Cristy would call it a commercial failure, just with as much propriety as to say, because the free laborers of the West Indies cannot, in justice to their own health, intellectual and moral culture, produce sugar and rum as cheap as the Cuban slaveholder, who steals his sugar already made, and drives his slaves eighteen hours in the twenty-four to make it, therefore the free-labor system in the West Indies is a commercial failure.

Now, when a system of robbery is going on, somebody has to be the sufferer; and it cannot be that there is general thrift, when a part are indolent consumers and robbers, at the expense and degradation of the mass. We thought prosperity was to be estimated by the thrift which a people in *general* derive from the profits of their exports; and not alone by the cheapness with which *foreign traders* buy from a *few* idle extortioners or robbers. Reason says, that when a Government is so administered as to develop to the highest degree the energies and protect the interests of the people in general, there we are to expect commercial as well as all other forms of prosperity. Also, that under such a Government we are to expect *permanent* prosperity, and cheapness, in proportion to the advance of capital, skill, and science; whereas, a Government administered upon the principles of fraud and oppression is necessarily subject to revolution, bankruptcy, and failure.

Also, different travellers bring different reports from these same islands. Let us look at causes coming under our own observation. As a matter of fact, the free-labor institutions of the free States of our Union are attended with a far greater degree of commercial prosperity than the institutions of the slave States. These are facts. Freedom does and will work well. But, says Mr. Cristy, "in giving so fully the evidence of the failure of free labor tropical cultivation, I do not wish to prove that slavery should not be abolished, but that intellectual and moral culture should accompany all schemes of emancipation." 1. This may be a *declared* issue; but is it the real one? Does any man form this idea from reading Mr. Cristy's pamphlet? He has laid down some seven propositions to illustrate in his pamphlet, but this is not one of them. We have read the pamphlet, and believe this point is but once, and that incidentally, alluded to. 2. Where is the intellectual and moral culture in Mr. Cristy's enterprise, in mere colonization. He says, the "Society have in their offer a larger number of SLAVES than they can colonize, and we cannot ask that its funds shall be diverted from so sacred an object as securing their freedom." That is upon the robber's policy, "give up your money or your brains"—"consent to be banished from the land of your birth, or stay in slavery." And where is the intellectual or moral culture in removing these "*slaves*," in their ignorance and degradation, to Africa, and upon *such principles?* Does Mr. Cristy say that "they *can* be educated when they get to Africa?" True, and so can the emancipated in the West Indies.

But to return to the commercial question. Mr. Cristy's position of emancipation on the soil was wrong—"Government should adopt a system of emancipation, *allowing compensation for the slaves, and connecting with it their colonization in Liberia.*" We ask, in reference to the West Indies, (and it being no part of colonization to give "intellectual or moral culture,") what advantage, commercially, would there be in removing the emancipated to Africa? Would *the same persons* raise more coffee and sugar there than in the West Indies? Would the climate induce greater activity and more labor than the land of their birth? Would their physical strength be greater after passing through the tedious, loathsome, and often fatal African fever incident to all colonized there?

Mr. Cristy quotes the *New York Evening Post* to show that the persons emancipated in West Indies are idle. Even if this be true, we ask, what will be gained, commercially, by colonizing the *same persons* to Africa?—to a climate still more sultry and *debilitating*.* Does Mr. C. say they will be encouraged to work by more generous laws?—that the laws in the West Indies are "unequal," oppressive? We thank Mr. Cristy for that concession. "*Unequal laws*," *then is the difficulty*—not emancipation on the soil—just what we have been trying to show. Bad management of many estates, worked by the agents of proprietors living in other lands, together with an oppressive Government, refusing sufficient remuneration and protection to the laborer, with other causes which we have and shall mention—these, and not freedom on the soil, is the hindering cause.

That free labor, even in the cultivation of tropical and semi-tropical productions, can cope with slave labor, is made clear, even by Mr. C.'s own pamphlet. Under the last proposition, seeming to have forgotten the object of the first, (that free labor fails to compete with slave labor in tropical and semi-tropical productions,) admits the testimony of friend Levi Coffin, "that free labor in Texas does now 'fully compete' with slave labor in the production of cotton"—a trop-

* Mr. C. also overlooks the fact that, since emancipation on those islands, the population has greatly *increased*, and the natives now enjoy the comforts and even luxuries of life, *consume* a much greater amount of sugar at *home* than in the days of slavery. So that, although there may be less exported than formerly, that fact does not prove idleness of the emancipated. A portion of their labor goes for home consumption.